

South Precinct Email Community Newsletter

November 29, 2007



Dear Community Friends:

Sexual Assaults

A pattern of actual or attempted sexual assaults against Asian women has been noted in the South Precinct area. They date back several months, the most recent occurring the morning of November 28th. The frequency of the assaults has increased, as has the level of aggression as the suspect has progressed from groping from behind to attempting to drag the victim away to continue the sexual assault.

The assaults have most often occurred as the women have exited a Metro bus and are on their way home or on their way to the bus in the morning. The suspect has attacked along routes served by the Metro bus routes of the 7, 32 and 36. It is possible that the suspect rides the bus with the victims and follows them off or watches bus stops. The events have primarily happened during the weekday with the majority of assaults occurring on Tuesdays & Wednesday. While the vast majority of events occurred during evening hours, a few of the attacks occurred in the early morning hours.

The suspect has been described as a black male, late teens to early 30s, 5'9", thin to medium build, medium to dark complexion. The suspect often wears a hooded sweatshirt or otherwise attempts to conceal his face. As the suspect often attacks the victims from behind, distinct suspect information has been lacking because often the victims do not get a good look at the suspect.

An additional complication we face is that many of the victims have been reluctant to speak with detectives in the Sexual Assault Unit to provide further information. In some cases, where the suspect grabbed the woman's rear, the victims didn't feel it was serious enough to report because "all he did was grope me. No big deal"

Additionally, many victims have not responded to detectives' requests for additional information or victim statements, making it difficult to obtain definitive suspect information or identification.

Given this, it is possible that more attacks and more serious assaults have occurred, but have not been reported. This is extremely troubling because the suspect is increasing his frequency of attacks and the attacks are becoming more aggressive. If allowed to continue, we expect the attacks to become even more violent.

We need to identify this individual and get him off the street.

What You Can Do

On the second page of this newsletter, I've included some general personal safety tips as well as personal safety tips while using public transportation.

REPORT IT!!

We urge anyone who has been the victim of a crime to be as forthcoming and cooperative as possible with the responding officers and investigating detectives. Any additional information can be helpful in identifying and apprehending the perpetrator(s) of the crime. Conversely, not disclosing information for whatever reason (thinking it's no big deal, shame or embarrassment, cultural pressures and considerations) can hinder the investigation.

If you have any information which may help us identify and apprehend the individual, please contact Detective Keith Savas of our Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Unit at 206.684.5361, email: keith.savas@seattle.gov

Until next time, Take Care and Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, South Precinct Crime Prevention Coordinator

GENERAL PERSONAL SAFETY

- Trust your instincts! Don't ignore your gut feeling or early danger signals. If a situation appears unsafe, look for avenues of escape.
- Stay alert. Scan your surroundings; make brief eye contact with those around you. Send the message that you're aware of what's going on around you.
- Before you leave home, decide what you actually need to take with you rather than automatically taking your entire handbag or wallet out of habit. For example, if you are going to the grocery store for a few items, you can carry cash, a single check, or credit/debit card, I.D. and keys in a pocket.
- When you're out, pay attention to the present moment. If you are in an area that has a history of trouble or an area with which you are unfamiliar, maintain a mild state of suspicion. Stay alert!
- If the situation or the area is a safety concern, keep someone informed of your moves. Consider carrying a cellular phone.
- Know what you're capable of doing. Are you capable of screaming, running or fighting? Have a plan! What would you do if you were attacked?
- Don't take unnecessary risks. If you feel a location or a situation is unsafe – get out.
- If possible, when on the street or out and about, travel with another person.
- If something or someone makes you feel uncomfortable, give yourself permission to do something about it. Cross the street or go into a store. Let someone know that you feel someone's following you, if that's what your gut tells you. Don't be afraid to draw attention to yourself or your situation.
- **SPOT AND AVOID POTENTIAL TROUBLE.** Learn to be aware of your surroundings and know who is around you. If another person makes you feel uncomfortable ask yourself, why? Is the person too close? Are they watching you? Are they trying to engage you in conversation for no apparent reason? **Listen to your inner feelings and then act on them.** You may decide to cross the street, move to a location where there are more people, go into a store or business, or ask for help.

PERSONAL SAFETY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

When taking public transportation:

- Keep bus schedules of frequently traveled routes and plan ahead to minimize waiting time.
- Choose the "safest" bus stop you can. Usually the best choice is a stop on a main street that is well lit with lots of traffic and people around.
- Be very aware when waiting for and/or exiting a bus. Many of the attacks have occurred as a person was waiting at a bus shelter or soon after he/she exited a bus.
- If there is a shelter at your bus stop, use it but do not huddle in the back or corner. Panhandlers, troublemakers and criminals are attracted to someone who does not have an easy exit.
- If possible, sit near the front of the bus, near or within easy view of the driver. If you are close to the driver you are less likely to be harassed. If someone does bother or frighten you with their behavior, move to another seat as soon as you can. If it continues let the driver and other passengers know.
- Avoid sleeping, cleaning out your pockets, balancing checkbooks etc. If you read, look up periodically.
- Always keep positive control of your items.